

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 16, 2021

Shalanda Young  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Kiran Ahuja  
Director  
Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20415

Robin Carnahan  
Administrator  
U.S. General Services Administration  
1800 F Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Director Young, Director Ahuja, and Administrator Carnahan:

We write to you today to express our grave concerns regarding current staffing levels at Federal offices. As you finalize reopening and staffing posture plans with individual Federal agencies this week, we request that you consider the impact that continued closure of many Federal offices to the public has on millions of Americans, particularly elderly and low-income Americans who rely on the in-person services offered, particularly at Social Security Administration (SSA) field offices, across the country, and urge you to prioritize the reopening of Federal offices in the interests of all Americans, not just those of unions.

We understand the critical need to ensure the health and safety of Federal employees throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as the COVID-19 vaccine becomes more widely distributed and states, localities, and businesses begin to resume pre-COVID operations, it is time for the Federal government to also reopen its offices throughout the country. A top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to Federal office reopening plans is both unreasonable and unnecessary, especially as states and cities across the country – from California to New York to Washington, D.C. – lift pandemic-related closures, allowing for a return to normalcy. In many regions of the country, COVID infection rates have been low to nonexistent for months, and yet Americans in those regions remain without access to in-person, taxpayer-funded services due to the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force's arbitrary requirements that Federal agencies and departments must, for example, provide 30-days' notice, at minimum, prior to requesting that a Federal employee return to work in-person and continue to encourage maximum telework throughout the reopening process.

Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now advises that fully vaccinated individuals may resume pre-pandemic activities without wearing a mask or physical distancing<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html#vaccinated>

and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has already lifted mask mandates<sup>2</sup> for fully-vaccinated Federal employees and contractors – a clear acknowledgment that the risk of contracting COVID-19 is low for vaccinated individuals and that it is safe for normal activities to resume. Advising agencies to satisfy all “collective-bargaining obligations,” per recent guidance from the Task Force, openly acknowledges that union whims remain an obstacle to the American people’s reasonable ability to seek benefits that they are entitled to under current law.

As countless constituents of ours have confirmed, the Federal government’s current service offerings simply cannot match those that were previously being provided in-person. If agency heads are required to bend to the whims of union bosses before reopening offices, as the Task Force appears to be requiring, our constituents, for example, will continue to be required to mail in vital documents – such as birth certificates and drivers licenses – to the SSA for an unknown period of time in order to access their Social Security benefits. Any further delays to reopening SSA field offices, as well as other critical in-person services provided by the Federal government, will only worsen the state of the SSA benefits backlog and continue to result in real-life consequences for America’s most vulnerable individuals and families.

All Federal employees and officials have the unique privilege and responsibility of serving the American people, which often includes providing in-person services and counseling that, at this time, cannot be replicated virtually. As the Task Force collaborates with Federal agencies and departments on Federal workforce reentry and post-reentry plans, we call on you to support, develop, and approve plans that allow resumption of in-person work as soon as possible in order for the Federal government to best serve the American people.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

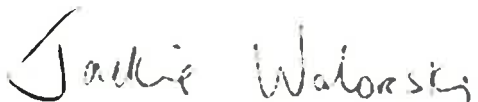
Sincerely,



KEVIN MCCARTHY  
House Republican Leader



TOM REED  
Member of Congress



JACKIE WALORSKI  
Member of Congress



DEVIN NUNES  
Member of Congress

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.govexec.com/management/2021/05/vaccinated-individuals-no-longer-need-masks-federal-buildings/174092/>



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DOUG LaMALFA  
Member of Congress



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